

PROTECTING YOUR WOODLAND FROM ANIMAL DAMAGE

Your woodland is a home to many different types of animals, and many of them like your trees almost as much as you do. They use your trees for shelter from summer storms and winter's cold. They build their homes and hide from predators in your trees. Your woodland is their supermarket. They are a natural part of the woodland ecosystem, but sometimes can become a problem.

Wildlife management is often thought of in terms of protecting, enhancing, and nurturing wildlife populations and their habitat. However, sometimes wildlife management means taking action to minimize the damage that these animals can do to your woodland.

Knowing what animal is damaging your trees is the first step to managing the damage. Bucks will rub against young trees in the fall to remove the velvet from their antlers, often shredding the bark and leaving it hanging in strips. Deer and rabbits will also feed on the young green shoots and buds of seedlings. Mice and other rodents will gnaw on the stems of young trees, usually during winter, removing patches of bark. The control method you choose will depend on what is eating your trees.

Your choices include modifying their habitat, exclusion and preventing the damage, and hunting or trapping.

- You can modify the habitat in your woodland to encourage these pests to move somewhere else, away from the area you are trying to protect. Most animals will feed where they feel safe from predators. Removing brush piles, weed patches, junk piles and other dense cover adjacent to tree plantings can help to minimize damage.
- Most animals can be kept out by fencing, but it can be expensive and doesn't always work if it not correctly installed. Repellents can minimize damage to leaves and shoots. However, if no alternative foods are available, repellents sometimes fail to provide protection and are only effective when applied before these animals start to rely on your trees for their food.
- Sometimes you need to manage populations that are out of control by hunting or trapping. When wildlife populations increase to the point where habitat modification, exclusion, and repellents no longer work, you should contact your local Department of Natural Resources wildlife specialist. They can help you get permits for hunting and trapping to reduce populations to a more manageable size so other measures will again become effective.

These are some simple things that you can do to protect your woodland from animal damage. To learn more about the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource's Wildlife Damage Program, contact your local **Department of Natural Resources wildlife specialist**, or visit Wisconsin's Wildlife Damage Program website at www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/damage/.

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